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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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May 20, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to urge you to take immediate steps to increase public access to government information pertaining to the ongoing environmental crisis in the Gulf of Mexico. Specifically, I request the immediate public release of all monitoring data related to the BP PLC oil spill, including the video of the source of the oil leak, and data related to the safety and effectiveness of the dispersant used to clean-up the leaking oil. Access to this information is crucial to the American public's understanding of the scope and potential impact of the oil spill, and to determining the best path towards a successful recovery.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has long been the people's window into their government, showing where it is doing things right, but also where it can do better. In that spirit, and considering the overwhelming public interest in this matter, I also urge you to ensure that all Federal agencies involved in the Government's response to the BP PLC oil spill fully comply with the disclosure requirements of the Electronic Freedom of Information Act of 1996.

This law requires, among other things, that Federal agencies publicly disclose records that have been released pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), when the records are likely to be the subject of future similar requests, and further requires that these "frequently requested" records be posted online. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2)(D). Federal agencies should also be encouraged to voluntarily and proactively disclose information to the public about this unprecedented oil spill.

In your historic January 21, 2009, Executive Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act, you stated that "[a] democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency." I could not agree more. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you to ensure greater transparency and public access to information about the BP PLC oil spill. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY  
Chairman